



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 1/Issue 5

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

Week 5 of the Shelter in Place.

We have another contribution from
Pastor Chuck Vitel.

This Sunday's reading is Psalm 68 (ESV).
Titled, ***Make Your Face Shine Upon Us.***
To the Choirmaster: With Stringed
Instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

Shout for joy to God, all the earth;² sing
the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise!³ Say to God,
"How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power that your enemies
come cringing to you.⁴ All the earth
worships you and sings praises to you;
they sing praises to your name." *Selah*
⁵Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds toward the
children of man.⁶ He turned the sea into
dry land; they passed through the river
on foot. There did we rejoice in him,
⁷ who rules by his might forever, whose
eyes keep watch on the nations—let not
the rebellious exalt themselves. *Selah*
⁸Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound
of his praise be heard,⁹ who has kept our
soul among the living and has not let our
feet slip.¹⁰ For you, O God, have tested

us; you have tried us as silver is tried.
¹¹You brought us into the net; you laid a
crushing burden on our backs;¹² you let
men ride over our heads; we went
through fire and through water; yet you
have brought us out to a place of
abundance.¹³ I will come into your house
with burnt offerings; I will perform my
vows to you,¹⁴ that which my lips
uttered and my mouth promised when I
was in trouble.¹⁵ I will offer to you burnt
offerings of fattened animals, with the
smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make
an offering of bulls and goats. *Selah*
¹⁶Come and hear, all you who fear
God, and I will tell what he has done for
my soul.¹⁷ I cried to him with my
mouth, and high praise was on my
tongue. ¹⁸If I had cherished iniquity in
my heart, the Lord would not have
listened. ¹⁹But truly God has listened; he
has attended to the voice of my
prayer.²⁰ Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me!

This is much more than a thanksgiving
Psalm. It's actually a prayer that God will
bless his people Israel so that the rest of
the world will come to know the true
God.

As we just celebrated Easter, let us
remember Christ's death and
resurrection and our mandate to spread
the gospel.



"The Watchman Notes" Pastor Chuck Vitel
Page 2



Page 5



The Watchman's Notes
Offering biblical messages,
perspectives and views on
Biblical & moral issues and current
events.

A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor –
Bible Teacher

*"For thus the Lord said to me: Go,
set a watchman; let him announce
what he sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]*

"Why doesn't God make life easier
for us?"

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

You know as a former Pastor I rarely got to hear positive things or victories. Most often - I heard people talk about *their problems, struggles, their trials, hardships, temptations and sins, their broken relationships, marriage problems, their conflicts, surgeries, their cancer, and death – almost everything that is not joyous or positive.* It was a rare occasion when someone called or came into my office and said, *"Pastor Chuck, I have no struggles or problems – let me tell you all the good things the Lord is doing in my life!"*

Life is hard!

Job 5:7 reminds us that: *"Man is born for trouble as surely as the sparks fly upward."*

Jesus said in John 16:33; *"In this world you will have trouble, but take heart. I have overcome the world." I cannot dispute or disagree with either comment!*

Life is so hard we don't even realize anymore how often we walk around complaining or whining about how hard

life is. Why can't God make LIFE easier for us? If I believe in God and love God – why is life so hard for me?

Let's be honest – we all want and need a certain degree of safety, security, ease and comfort in our lives – *but in this world* - it's all transitory, it doesn't last. Life isn't easy. It's filled with struggles, trials, difficult times, hardships, and *just the stuff that happens in life.* Why is that? Because we live in a fallen world - nothing seems to work the way it's supposed to work. *Sin [Genesis 3] has stained every part of the physical universe. Sin has deeply infected the human bloodstream.*

Therefore – things go wrong - things break. Our cars breakdown at the wrong time. Our bodies wear out. A new Virus comes along [COVID-19]. We grow old, get sick and die. People kill each other. Terrorists blow up people and buildings and fly airplanes into skyscrapers! Marriages break up. Children & young adults get hooked on drugs, alcohol, and sex. Babies are aborted. People get cancer. Priests molest children. Pastors commit adultery. Our friends disappoint us. And we disappoint our friends. People get fired or laid off from their jobs. We get sued or we sue someone. That's Life!

There's an Old Saying that says, *"Into each life some rain must fall."* However, at times, it seems like a downpour of rain! No one gets a free ride in life – no one gets an exemption from pain and sorrow – not even those who commit themselves to follow Jesus Christ.

Do Christians struggle? You bet they do! That's one of the principles of the spiritual life – [that some Christians would rather not talk about or admit]. "Christians do have struggles/trials in life." *Stuff happens to Christians and*

non-Christians alike! Rain falls on good people and bad people alike.

The Bible says [Acts 14:22], *"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."* The Apostle Paul told Timothy, a young Pastor, *"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."* [2 Tim. 2:3]. *Troubles and trials* in the Christian life are inevitable, lifelong, and yet ultimately beneficial for us. For we encounter *God's grace & mercy* through our trials in ways that would never happen if the trials had not come in the first place.

A long time ago, someone gave me great advice – one of the wisest things I've ever learned - someone said to me concerning this topic of *"our struggles & trials in life"* – *"Chuck, Be a Student – Not a Victim."* In other words, when hard times or difficult trials come along – *Be a Student of life, Not a Victim of life.* Many people today are *"Professional Victims,"* always talking or complaining about how hard life is or how unfair life is. *And It can be!*

When hard times or – *"the stuff of life"* hits you in the face > *The Victim says, Why? Why me? Why now? Why this? "Why did this happen to me?" O' God, not another thing!* However, *The Student says, "What can I learn from this thing that just happened to me? Or, "I don't care why it happened, I want to learn what God is trying to teach me."*

The *Victim* looks at life and cries out, *"Life isn't fair, look what they're doing to me or what life has done to me."*

The *Student* looks at life and says, *"What happened to me could have happened to anybody." What can I learn from this?*

The Victim always feels sorry for himself/herself, to the point, that he/she has no time for others. The Student focuses on helping and serving others to the point he/she has no time to feel sorry for themselves!

The Victim begs God to remove the problems of life so that he/she might be happy. The Student has learned through the problems of life that God alone is the source of all true happiness & joy – it's not our circumstances.

You see, this principle of life, about "being a Student of life – not a Victim of life," really helps answer questions all of us have asked at one time or another: *Why did this happen to Me? Why is it taking me so long to feel better and deal with the "stuff of life?"* God has ordained that even though we are being made more like Jesus each day – it only happens a little bit at a time. Meanwhile, Our Spiritual success is defined by faithfulness, obedience, & perseverance.

God gave O.T. Israel the Promised Land and said enter it and conquer it [Explained in Book of Joshua]. O.T. Israel entered the Promised Land – but God did not allow them to conquer it all at once. They had to fight and conquer the Land, acre by acre, city by city! *In life - There is victory to be had – but it will not come quickly or easily –it's step by step.* Understand - Our troubles, trials, and tests are normal – they're part of life!

O' how I wish we had a simple answer to that question WHY do things happen to us? *"WHY" is a question that does not have a pat or simple answer.* Indeed, even godly believers have sometimes wondered about the ways of God, *like the prophet JOB. And if JOB never got a complete answer, what can we expect?* As I read the Bible, I don't think there is one single answer to that question of

Why. But there are some helps or comforts I can give you that come from the Bible.

One answer to the question "WHY" is tucked away in the Bible, and it may surprise you. It is found in a New Testament book we don't read very much: Second Corinthians, Chapter 1:1-11. In the first 11 verses of the first chapter, we discover a perspective on the heartaches of life that may help us. After a brief greeting to his readers (vv. 1-2) in which Paul (along with Timothy) wishes grace and peace to his readers in Corinth and throughout the surrounding region, *he immediately begins to talk about the comfort* he had received in the midst of much hardship he had endured as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 1: 3-11 sets the stage for the whole book by plainly saying that no matter what Paul had suffered, it was more than worth it. St. Paul must have had the mentality or perspective of *"Being a Student and Not a victim."* That's the true Christian position/attitude to have. As true Believers and followers of Christ – we ought to believe so much in the Sovereignty [God rules, He is in control] of God that when troubles come, not only do we Believe in God – but, we Know - that God is at work somehow, somewhere, in some way for our good and His glory.

Paul says as much in Romans 8:28. *"And we know that IN all things God works for the GOOD of those who LOVE Him."*

How does affliction and hardships in life work to benefit or comfort us?"

a. It Draws us Closer to the Lord. [Read 2 Cor. 1:3-5] - We never discover the "depth of God's compassion" until we get in a place where we need God's help, compassion and mercy desperately.

b. It Equips us to Minister to Others. [Read 2 Cor.1:6-7] - *The Point is: We never suffer alone.* Someone else is always watching. Our friends and family members watch to see how we respond. They want to know if what we say we believe is really enough for us in the way we will respond to tragedy or trials in life or in hard times. And furthermore, in the distance, others watch from afar what we go through. Many of them are unbelievers who wonder if Christ [God] is real.

c. It Empties us of All Self-Reliance. [Read 2 Cor. 1:8-10] - On Jesus we have set our Hope that He will continue to deliver us" Hard times come to teach us not to trust in ourselves - but only in the Lord who is able to raise the dead. Until your faith is put to the test, it remains all theory. *Ask yourself:* What exactly is God trying to teach me [us] when He allows these hard times and struggles?

d. It Reveals the True Power of Prayer. [Read 2 Cor. 1:11] - *We join together in our prayers - and get under and lift the burdens of life as we pray for each other. Our prayers matter! Through our prayers - we unleash the power of heaven for the problems we face on this earth.* So, we ought to pray more and first, not less and last in times of trouble.

In summary - no one is exempt from the trials and hardships of life. *Becoming a Christian, a Believer in Christ is wonderful - but it does not free you or me from the burdens or troubles of life.* In many ways becoming a Biblical Christian

may increase your troubles because of “spiritual opposition you face.” When hard times come, we only have these choices:

- We can suffer with God, or We can suffer without God.
- We can suffer by ourselves, or We can suffer with the people of God.

As we receive comfort from God, we are then equipped to minister to others. We then pass along to others what God has given to us. *This is the very essence of Christianity.*

James, the half-brother of Jesus, said it well in [James 1:2-4 NIV]; *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”* Amen.

Pastor Vitels message this week brings to light a subject will become even more relevant in the coming days, weeks and dare I say months ahead. These are extraordinary times that are causing us to pull back from ‘normal’ activities and when social distancing is an act of love and not one of fear. But this self-isolation can bring about depression as we are separated from our love ones. And it can be inordinately hard if we allow ourselves to just stare out the window and withdraw with-in ourselves. As Christians we also need to shelter ourselves from the faulty theology that says that as Christians we are exempt from hardships and sufferings and when something like the new coronavirus upsets our normal life our faith begins to be shaken. We begin to question God and question if, “God can protect us from this virus?” The answer is absolutely. But I think what we need to

consider is that God is calling us to a more resilient faith. As evidence let’s look at the tenth plague that God brought upon Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let the children of Israel leave. It’s an appropriate story because the present day Jewish community just celebrated Passover last week. Passover begins with a ceremonial dinner, called a Seder, where the story of the exodus is told, of the Jews’ freedom from slavery and flight from Egypt.

I think it’s appropriate to revisit the story because in some circles the virus within our midst today is being referred to as the eleventh plague.

In reading Exodus 12 we can draw a correlation between what happened to the Israelites and what is happening to us today. In the last part of verse 22 of Exodus 12, God commands, “and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.” This was God’s protection for the tribe of Israel for the tenth plague. Our protection today is to shelter-in-place for protection against our plague. We should welcome it as a time for restoration, renewal and revival of our faith and not a pronouncement of judgement for confinement. We need to realize the following and not wallow in self-pity.

- ♥ God has given us the power to overcome our fear through faith.
- ♥ We were also given the gift of love. The sort of self-sacrificing love that God gives to us. Do we love our neighbors enough to, rather than dying for them, die to ourselves for them? Do we love them enough to protect the unsaved, the vulnerable? Do we love others enough to shift how we

worship, where we pray, and with whom we share our time?

- ♥ In addition to power and love, God gave us the reason of a sound-mind, the gift of discernment and judgment — if only we would use it.

Easter 2020 by Malcolm Guite

And where is Jesus, this strange Easter day?
Not lost in our locked churches,
anymore
Than he was sealed in that dark sepulchre.
The locks are loosed; the stone is rolled away,
And he is up and risen, long before,
Alive, at large, and making his strong way
Into the world he gave his life to save,
No need to seek him in his empty grave.

He might have been a wafer in the hands
Of priests this day, or music from the lips
Of red-robed choristers, instead he slips
Away from church, shakes off our linen bands
To don his apron with a nurse: he grips
And lifts a stretcher, soothes with gentle hands
The frail flesh of the dying, gives them hope,
Breathes with the breathless, lends them strength to cope.

On Thursday we applauded, for he came
And served us in a thousand names and faces
Mopping our sickroom floors and catching traces
Of that virus which was death to him:
Good Friday happened in a thousand places
Where Jesus held the helpless, died with them
That they might share his Easter in their need,
Now they are risen with him, risen indeed.



PRAYER LIST

✓ **Continuing Prayers for loss:**

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year families.

✓ **Continuing Prayers for physical needs:**

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria

✓ **Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:**

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ **Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:**

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor and Sue Vitel

✓ **Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:**

Leonard Hatfield

✓ **Continuing Prayers for:**

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families

✓ **New Requests:**

Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman as they are quarantined from each other.

Anne Benlirio - My Co-worker's (Alicia) husband--Oscar, is fighting for his life right now at the Condell ICU. He is a nurse. He was infected through his patients that have Covid19. Please help me pray for him and his family that God will heal him and restore him to good health so he can continue his noble calling to help those that are sick. He is a warrior in these times. Please also pray for Alicia who is very vulnerable and easily get nervous and stressed. May God give her peace and strength and sustain her in this ordeal. Oscar is the only main bread winner of their family (+2 teen kids). Thank you.

Mylin Lardizabal - My husband and I are both nurses and were told that we will be pulled to other areas as needed. We are very willing to help and do our jobs but also scared to get expose to this virus due to lack of supplies such as masks, eyeshields, gloves. The shortage of PPEs are very real and were being told to reuse almost everything.

Please pray for us that we will stay healthy to take care of others. Our biggest concern is not getting our girls and our friends sick and that includes our church family.

UPDATE Mylin Lardizabal - my husband Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month. Thank you for your prayers and please continue to pray for us and all the healthcare workers.

Brian Mitchell requested prayer on behalf of Carol Pelfrey. Carol is from Ohio and visited our Sunday School and service a few months ago. During her visit she shared a prayer request. Her son Daniel Ruehlman who lives in Morton Grove has terminal brain cancer and Carol is concerned about his spiritual condition. Brian met with Daniel and was able to present the gospel. When COVID-19 hit the area, Daniel no longer ventured outdoors because of his weakened state but offered to remain in touch with Brian through email. The swelling has returned in Daniel's brain. Pray for Daniel as he voiced that he made a decision for Christ but now must be in a different place. Pray that God will comfort him and the Pelfrey family, as they can't travel to be with him.

Brian also asked for prayer as another co-worker tested positive making the total 5. He is also asking for prayer for Liza as her CNA tested positive.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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